



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE SCHOOL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

VOLUME XVI
NUMBER 3

MARCH, 1908

WHOLE
NUMBER 153

A GENERAL VIEW OF GERMAN PEDAGOGY FOR THE BENEFIT OF FOREIGNERS. III

WILHELM MÜNCH

Professor of Pedagogy in the University of Berlin

In considering the secondary school we must not forget the primary ones. That elementary instruction was made available to every child in the nation, that, indeed, all were compelled to receive it; that the aim was to eliminate all illiterates from the land, and that there was a seriously minded earnestness connected with the enforcement of those principles, was indeed no small thing at a time when such intentions or their execution were wanting all around. But it was nevertheless small compared with the task which could not but present itself in the education of the nation. Reading, writing, and arithmetic, and in addition a knowledge of the doctrines of one's church, how insignificant is all this in comparison with the great and yet simple ideal that Pestalozzi set up for the teaching of simple children of the people! But while Pestalozzi's own effectiveness remained very limited and the definite results questionable, it must be held to the lasting honor of Prussia that it recognized the value of the principles of the noble Swiss, and made them, with the necessary practical adaptation, the starting-point of a new system of national schools which afterward spread and expanded farther. Development of individual capacities, instead of imparting factual and verbal information and one-sided proficiency; friendly co-operation of teachers with pupils;

a consciousness of the nobility of the profession, whatever the outward modesty of the position; continual striving for further self-instruction and perfection on the part of the teachers; an idealism not depending on their connection with the official church and professed doctrines; such are the tendencies and the features which came into the system of national schools from that source, and which undoubtedly raised it high above that of the preceding century. It did not by any means become perfect for that reason. Much narrowness of means had to be reckoned with and struggled against. Even the continual diminution in the number of illiterates in itself gives no guarantee of a high level of popular intelligence and moral discipline. The freedom of movement among teachers and schools at times seemed dangerous to the churches, and no less so to timid governments; and then there resulted a temporary tightening of cords and screws. In certain points the German elementary-school system lagged behind that of other countries, such as France for instance, where practical branches of instruction (such as domestic economy, or the cultivation of fruit trees and so on) were included in the curriculum of the national schools. On the whole, however, it cannot be denied that there has been continual progress here, and at the present moment it certainly cannot be said that things are at a standstill. The bare fact that the once simple schools have expanded more and more into great systems with many classes and teachers, may perhaps be mentioned here. The problems which nevertheless still remain to be solved will be considered later.

There are of course all the more of these in the case of the secondary schools, not only because their whole task goes deeper, but because they and all the conditions of their existence are more complicated. In this world all good endeavors are sure to produce secondary results which were not intended and are not good. Everything that was at some former time good, may at another time become only half good, or evil. Splendid as was this rise of the ideal of universal harmonious culture, it nevertheless cast a shadow, in the form of curricula comprising many different subjects at the same time, and only with diffi-

culty keeping the balance between them. Hereby, corresponding to the development of the different sciences, a continual increase in the number of branches of instruction was not to be avoided. On the other hand, it could not but occur that in the construction of curricula from a purely ideal standpoint, the true relation to the real life of the present and the future, and to its needs, were overlooked. And even if school instruction in the constitution of the country, in civil duties, in economic problems, in the living languages of neighboring countries, in all kinds of manual skill, and so much else of concrete importance, did not remain permanently excluded, nevertheless the door was opened only with delay and hesitation or doubt. And there still remains the same contrast in points of view, in that for some the essential thing is to let the powers shape themselves upon a small number of theoretical subjects, and then at the proper stage of maturity emerge and work their way easily into the problems of real life; while for others it is the training of the abilities from the very beginning on subjects which also have importance in themselves for one's life and future. Scarcely anyone now ventures, it is true, to amalgamate the idea of formal culture merely with grammatical schooling in the ancient languages, as was long the vogue. But as to the true relation between the idealistic and realistic points of view, people are on the whole very disagreed. Perhaps the difficulty is felt no less elsewhere, and perhaps indeed it will be felt more in the future than hitherto. There are problems in education which never reach full solution.

But to proceed. We also are very well aware that even the noble aim of giving the younger generation a place in the organic life of the community, and of subordinating the individual to the ends of the state, must in certain directions have an unfavorable effect. The development of free individuality has had to suffer under it, even if the difference is actually by no means so fundamental as English critics, for instance, at present represent. It shall not here be examined where the most natures all of one pattern or the most pattern-like feelings are actually to be found; it shall suffice to put the question. In any case there is

not the least lack of criticism of our own arrangements among us, and doubts can everywhere be freely expressed, once more in spite of the fact that abroad (and moreover in Germany too, outside of Prussia) people are fond of drawing a definite picture of our condition as one of mere subjection, reduction to uniformity and drill. For many people it is an agreeable feeling to look down upon their neighbors in complete self-complacency. Moreover we are also very well aware that the eternal seeking for a perfect method of instruction, which has been continually increasing in the course of the nineteenth century, is not yet bringing us any nearer to the solution of the really great problem of education. We know that there is on the whole a tendency to intellectualize this problem; that in spite of all good intentions of influencing the whole character, the intellect is too preponderatingly cared for; that, again in spite of good endeavors, we more often than we think stick fast in words, and, by words, dull the faculties of our pupils. We have developed, and brought pretty generally to a certain virtuosity, the technique of class instruction, the art of teaching any large school class in such a way that all take part together during the whole time, quite in contrast to the French procedure according to which the teacher only occupied himself with single members of the class in turn; nevertheless we know that even this method of instruction, apparently so full of life, and so enlivening, has a bad side; it is seldom that this method enables one to draw out individual pupils to the most concentrated use of their faculties, and as to the amount of real co-operation and understanding on the part of the particular pupils, both these and the teachers can easily be deceived. This is all the more unfortunate at a time when, as at present, almost everyone desires that the class work should not be accompanied by any considerable amount of home work.

The teachers in our secondary schools on the average achieve the result, that three-quarters or four-fifths of the pupils in their class become fit to be moved up into the next class at the end of the term (and not merely that they are, as is customary in France, as a matter of fact moved up). But to this end they

must devote the most attention to those of medium capacities, and in this way it may easily happen that the more gifted ones do not get the proper assistance. The danger of producing nothing but average men is not remote. Our teachers have, within the school year or term, to accomplish definite tasks which are not indeed imposed upon them from above with the same punctilious preciseness as in France, but which they for the most part rather determine for themselves. Nevertheless, once determined, they must keep to them, and this naturally often prevents them from lingering where they would like to, going more deeply into a subject where it seems possible, and digressing where it might have a stimulating effect. In plain words, the danger of drilling instead of educating is never completely absent. And on their side, the pupils, whose time and strength is in most cases completely taken up by the obligatory work, do not get sufficient opportunity for the development of an independent will, of truly personal effort, as was possible in the unregulated past. We recognize clearly all these evils, and further ones as well. The large number of pupils, and also in secondary schools the relatively large number of masters teaching together, in addition to the strict control over instruction, has as a result the fact that the pupils are rather placed and classified according to their performance than distinguished and appreciated according to their individuality; certain intrinsically valuable types thereby unhappily come off badly—not that most other countries can boast any better arrangements.

But still more important is the fact that German teachers in secondary schools, having themselves been grounded at the university with the greatest thoroughness in the branches of knowledge which they selected, in after life also much prefer to regard themselves as representatives of science rather than as educators or trainers of youth. There are not wanting among them those to whom the duty of teaching appears all their lives as a disagreeable “must,” as a loss of dignity and happiness, and others are at least hindered by their own familiarity with science from granting the young learners a due measure of leniency and consideration. The thoroughness which they have acquired in

their studies becomes pedagogic heaviness, and the earnestness of the savant, harshness. A gloomy air and unwillingness to praise and recognize are not rare phenomena. In this connection too it may be seen how little separates efficiency and imperfection. And, valuable as it may seem to us, that the men appointed to positions as teachers in public schools are now also regarded as agents of the nation, as public officials of equal importance with those of the judicature and others, yet it cannot escape us that the emphasizing of the official character, which is increasing just at present, again forms a danger for the more delicate interpretation of the task of education. It was long ago remarked that many of our secondary-school teachers brought something that was too military with them into their profession, that their tone and their standards remained too similar to those of the reserve officer: and in any case many have regarded it as great personal efficiency merely to be able to keep good discipline in their classes. In this respect indeed our schools always find recognition from the foreigners who visit them, only that this good discipline suggests the fear of a too complete subjection, that perhaps too much docility and tameness has already been produced among the young people.

Thus we do not try to shut our eyes to the presence everywhere of the "defects of our qualities." No less must it be admitted that the expert, consistent guidance of the whole of public education, although it is surely better than self-thwarting efforts at interference on the part of laymen, or the rule of mere "honorable" notabilities, may yet easily cripple the initiative of the individual teachers and educators. The considerable sums of money that have recently been spent upon stately, handsome, healthy, and well-equipped school buildings, must not blind us to the fact that fine, large playgrounds to match might be almost more important, but have nevertheless only been procured in a minority of cases. Whatever the certainty of the average results of instruction, whatever the perfection in the mental process of teaching and learning, these cannot conceal from us the fact that physical training, and the mental quickening connected with it, has long been cared for with greater zeal and suc-

cess elsewhere. Our German gymnastics with their systematic character, their well-considered physiological basis, and the teachers' zeal for continual improvement, have, without doubt, long been too highly valued at the expense of free movement and development in games. Our curricula have on the whole left us decidedly less time for the cultivation of manual skill than has been the case in many other countries. To all this our own eyes have been opened, I think. But is this to say or prove that we ought to throw ourselves as quickly as possible in the other direction—abandon what is positive in order to free ourselves from what is negative?

At the present time demands are being made which go farther than mere assimilation to any system of education existing abroad. There is a literature in which the completest possible reversal of everything which has hitherto characterized our school life is demanded. It is true that similar protests against the existing state of things are not wanting, for example, in France, either; a series of polemical writings has appeared there also in the last five or ten years. But in our case the voices are still more passionate, of course with manifold gradations and with theories quite contradictory of one another, but in any case going as far as the extremest radicalism, rising to a kind of educational nihilism or anarchism.¹ It is a violent reaction against the fundamental points of view of centuries, and especially against the educational arrangements of the last hundred years. Rousseau is outdone in his belief in the power of natural self-development; all opposition to it, all limitation and compulsion of it, are to cease, all learning is to be only of one's own free will, every natural development will of itself turn out for the best; it is only the meddling of education and schools that does harm. Above all each individual characteristic has its rights, and there is no greater crime than the reduction to universal standards. The prevailing methods of instruction are completely wrong-headed, the learning ought to dwindle to a

¹ These publications have been discussed more fully in two works by the author of the present article: *Zukunftspädagogik*, Berlin, 1904; Georg Reimer: and, *Eltern, Lehrer und Schulen in der Gegenwart*, Berlin, 1906; Alexander Duncker.

very small amount, and this little should be made much easier; the principal effort should be devoted altogether to physical development, that of the mind has far too long been given a wrongful supremacy; young people as well as old must be able to live their lives to the full (*sich ausleben*), but they are prevented by an oppressive, false tradition.

This is, in brief, what the radical voices are saying; among them, it is true, some more moderate ones are to be heard. According to these latter the essential things are, relative emancipation for young people, enlarged possibilities of self-development, a better balance between culture of the intellect and of the character, greater opportunities for activity, for practical occupation by the side of book learning, a closer relation to life, more cheerfulness and good fellowship, less dependence upon the knowledge that is transmitted in a ready-made—in far too ready-made a form—and upon culture which stifles or at any rate entangles the learner as with a web. The present generation is indeed weary of culture, and is becoming conscious of it, and it is to some extent weary of all authority, of all the norms which impose themselves upon it; it is seeking in feverish haste for new guiding lines, but without being able to content itself with any one of them. To regulate life according to aesthetic, rather than ethical, standards is, for instance, such a tendency, which however finally leads to nothing. A deep inward restlessness characterizes the time, the very number of stimuli produces neutralization, or at any rate confusion. For the parents, also, who ought to educate along with the school teachers, the once firm support of a universally effective tradition has disappeared. But their interest in education as such is no longer very great either. And the extensive subjection of the schools to state control has undoubtedly worked in this direction. At first people were pleased at the increase of opportunities for learning and at the greater certainty of results, but gradually it has become evident that the school with its binding regulations, its rights, its decisive judgments, its great demands upon the mind, has left the family no true freedom of movement, and in proportion as it has deprived it of responsibility, it has gradually

caused its consciousness of responsibility to dwindle. And at the same time an attitude of distrust has been little by little aroused in those thus forced into the background, toward what goes on behind the closed school-doors. There is no general confidence, either in the justice or the good intentions of the teachers, or in the reasonableness of their educational procedure. And the families see their demand for a consideration of the individual peculiarities of their children unsatisfied, a consideration such as is in reality neither possible nor wholesome. These peculiarities themselves, however, are often nothing but the symptoms of a nervous decadence in the civilized humanity of the present. To preserve the greatest possible degree of physical strength thus very naturally seems more important than mental equipment and schooling. Such is the unsatisfactory state of affairs.

To oppose it by simply defending and propping up what has long existed, is clearly useless. Though there is much that is unrealizable and unwholesome in what is demanded, there remains a certain amount of what is really desirable. But assuredly those who have the responsibility for any reorganization must not lose their prudence. They are well aware of the existing problems, but the right degree both of initiative and of cautiousness is needful.

[To be concluded]